

NEWS

United States Department of Justice
U.S. Attorney, District of New Jersey
401 Market Street, Fourth Floor
Camden, New Jersey 08101



Christopher J. Christie, U.S. Attorney

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Assistant U.S. Attorneys
RONALD CHILLEMI
856-757-5232
DEBORAH PRISINZANO-MIKKELSEN
856-757-5152

carr0404.rel
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Vineland Man Sentenced to 270 in Prison for
Cocaine and Heroin Distribution Conspiracy

(More)

Greg Reinert, PAO
Public Affairs Office

856-757-5233
973-645-2888

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CAMDEN – A Vineland man was sentenced to 270 months in federal prison today for his conviction on charges for cocaine and heroin distribution, U.S. Attorney Christopher J. Christie announced.

U.S. District Judge Jerome B. Simandle also ordered Luis Carrion-Soto, 33, to pay a \$5,000 fine and to serve five years of supervised release upon the completion of his prison term. Carrion-Soto has been held without bail since his arrest on March 9, 2007.

On Nov. 27, 2007, after 12 hours of deliberations, a jury convicted Carrion-Soto of one count each of drug trafficking conspiracy and possession with intent to distribute cocaine and heroin.

According to the Indictment, Carrion-Soto conspired with Eugenio Toro, Margarito Diaz and others, in a conspiracy to distribute cocaine in the Vineland area.

During the trial, the jury heard the testimony of seven government witnesses and viewed dozens of pieces of evidence regarding Carrion-Soto's scheme to provide cocaine and heroin to other drug dealers in the Vineland area.

In convicting the defendant, the jury found that the defendant, along with others, possessed and distributed more than 500 grams of cocaine and 100 grams of heroin.

According to testimony and evidence presented at trial, Carrion-Soto admitted to law enforcement authorities that he was part of a cocaine smuggling ring based in Puerto Rico. The ring obtained kilograms of cocaine in Medellin, Colombia, and transported the drugs by a boat to Puerto Rico, and ultimately shipped the cocaine to the defendant in the United States via a U.S. Postal contract carrier. Carrion-Soto then distributed the cocaine to other drug dealers in New Jersey.

The defendant was apprehended on Interstate 95 in South Carolina and was found to be in possession of 1 kilogram of cocaine and 125 grams of heroin. According to trial testimony, shortly after Carrion-Soto's arrest in South Carolina, he admitted to authorities that he was traveling to Florida to meet a potential customer.

In determining the actual sentence, Judge Simandle consulted the advisory U.S. Sentencing Guidelines, which provide appropriate sentencing ranges that take into account the severity and characteristics of the offense, the defendant's criminal history, if any, and other factors. The judge, however, is not bound by those guidelines in determining a sentence.

Parole has been abolished in the federal system. Defendants who are given custodial terms must serve nearly all that time.

Christie credited the Special Agents of the DEA, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Gerald P. McAleer in Newark, the Cumberland County Narcotics Task Force, under the direction of Cumberland County Prosecutor Ronald J. Casella, and Police Officers with the Florence County Sheriff's Office in South Carolina, under the direction of Sheriff William Kenney Boone, with developing the investigation which resulted in the conviction.

The Cumberland County Narcotics Task Force is comprised of the Cumberland County Prosecutor's Office, DEA, FBI, ATF, New Jersey State Police, Vineland Police Department, Bridgeton Police Department, and the Millville Police Department.

The government was represented by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Ronald Chillemi and Deborah Prisinzano-Mikkelsen of the U.S. Attorney's Office in Camden.

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Defense Attorney: Ronald B. Thompson, Esq. Voorhees